

The project site is in proximity to occupied Blanding's Turtle (BT) habitat. The BT is a state-listed Endangered species. The methods provided below are intended to keep BT from being harmed by construction.

As contractors, you have an important role to play in protecting this species.

- Do not undertake activities in "unprotected areas" (areas not enclosed by exclusion fence) without a turtle monitor present.
- Be aware of Blanding's Turtles. Look for them before starting work or moving equipment.
- Keep fences intact (no holes or tears), embedded, and free from obstructions to keep turtles out of work zone. Do not place sticks or construction debris on the silt fence. Do not push dirt up against the silt fence.
- Close and secure construction gates at the end of each evening to prevent turtles from entering the site at night and nesting.
- Backfill trenches or holes on the same day as disturbance.
- Do not handle the turtle unless necessary to move out of harm's way.

IDNR Requirements

Work on the project occurs during the turtle's inactive season from approximately November 1st to March 1st. If work must occur during the active season:

1. Educate personnel working on site about the Blanding's Turtle. Post photos of juvenile and adult Blanding's Turtles at a central location. State-listed species may not be handled without the appropriate permits pursuant to the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act.
2. Install exclusionary silt fence by the end of March and maintain it through October (if needed) to prevent turtles from entering the construction area. Conduct daily inspections during construction to ensure that exclusionary fencing is properly installed (dug into the ground) and to check if turtles are present.
3. Cover trenches at the end of each workday. Before starting each workday, trenches and excavations should be routinely inspected to ensure no turtles (or other amphibians and reptiles) have become trapped within them.
4. If Blanding's turtles are encountered, crews should stop work immediately, allow the turtle to move out of the way and have the Trained Construction Monitor contact IDNR at (217) 785-5500

BT Encounter Plan and notes are provided should BT be encountered onsite. Adhere to the following protocol:

1. Stop work in the area immediately.
2. Do not attempt to move the BT. Allow the BT to continue on its way.
3. Contact the Trained Construction Monitor. The Trained Construction Monitor will contact the IDNR for further instruction.
4. The Trained Construction Monitor will contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) office to report the incident within 24-hours. The Trained Construction Monitor will provide the location, the project name and explanation of the encounter.
5. The Trained Construction shall inspect the temporary barrier after a breach of the barrier or when a BT is found within the barrier area. They will oversee the barrier repair, sweep the area, document the occurrence in the logbook, and sign off on repairs before construction can resume.
6. *It is illegal, under federal and state law, to take, import, transport, possess, or sell an animal listed as threatened or endangered without a license*

PRIMARY CONTACTS

Trained Construction Monitor (TBD)

Cell:

Email:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way

Springfield, IL 62702

(217) 785-5500

SECONDARY CONTACTS



About Blanding's Turtles

BT are semi-aquatic, medium-sized turtles, measuring up to 10 inches in upper shell length. They have a dark, domed shell with yellow flecks that may fade with age, and a bright yellow chin and throat. The lower shell or plastron has six pairs of scutes that are predominantly yellow with black blotching on the margins. Their notched upper jaw and up-curved mouth gives the appearance of a smile. Males and females appear similar with slight differences in size and shape. Hatchlings are 1.2 to 1.4 inches long and dark brown to black or gray, usually with faint speckling. They inhabit mosaic landscapes, which include both permanent and temporary water bodies as well as upland habitat. They prefer shallow wetlands with soft organic substrates, open water, and emergent vegetation, but will use a variety of wetland types. Blanding's Turtles make more use of upland sites than many other aquatic turtle species. They use

upland habitats that are typically within 0.1 miles of a wetland but could be as far as 1.2 miles away; these habitats are used as nesting sites and travel corridors. Both adults and hatchlings overwinter in permanent wetlands with organic substrates and at least a few inches of unfrozen water. They emerge in the spring around April 15th, and eventually move towards disturbed, loose soils to nest during late May through early July. Pregnant females will make long, multiple day, meandering migrations to nesting sites, and begin nesting in the evening. The species is a state listed Endangered Species, meaning it has special protection.

Trained Construction Monitor's Responsibilities

The Trained Construction Monitor shall be a member of the construction crew and shall be trained by **TBD** about steps to take in the event a BT is encountered. They shall also be trained in how to conduct daily inspection and monitoring of the BT temporary barrier as part of daily erosion and sediment control monitoring and logging those inspections into an inspection book, and responsible for ensuring repairs of the temporary barrier are completed. The Trained Construction Monitor shall be on-site full time while construction is occurring. The Trained Construction Monitor shall have stop work authority. Before work, the Trained Construction Monitor will visually inspect the construction area to ensure there are no BT present. In the event of a BT encounter in the construction area, the Trained Construction Monitor will stay near the BT, until IDNR has been contacted and further instruction has been provided.

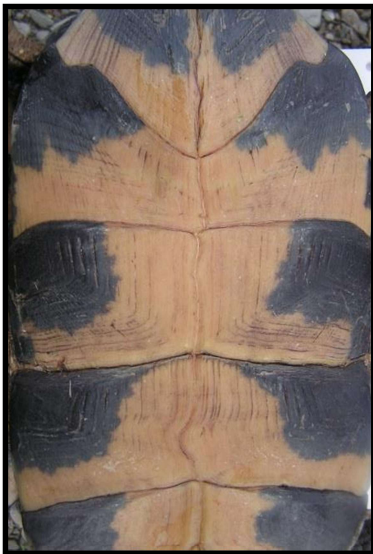
Contractor's Responsibilities to Protect BT During Project Construction

1. Construct the project in accordance with the plans and permit designed to minimize harm to this animal.
2. Work within the secured zone only
3. All individuals working on the site shall have received the Construction Education and Encounter Plan Training.
4. Ensure everyone working on the project has read and understood this summary information and any plan notes.
5. A row of silt fencing at least 48" high is required per the plan specifications encompassing the work areas.
6. No new silt fence installation or work in unprotected areas without having areas searched/cleared by monitor.
7. Work shall not occur in these locations outside of the fence or prior to fence installation.
8. Keep exclusion fencing in good working order, free from holes and tears and free from debris and soil.
9. Construction gate is to be closed and secured at night, as that is when nesting activity occurs.
10. Before work, visually inspect the construction area to ensure that there are no BT present.
11. Fill all holes/trenches daily at close of construction.
12. Check for turtles underneath or around parked construction equipment and cars before driving.
13. Drive carefully to avoid hitting a turtle. If you see a black "rock" in the middle of any area slow down and be sure it is not a turtle. If it is a turtle, let it pass, watch it/detain it, and contact the trained construction monitor.
14. **It is a violation of Illinois Law** to handle BT without proper permits. This includes taking BT off site or home. The Qualified BT Monitor or IDNR should be the only one handling BT. *It is illegal to take, import, transport, possess, or sell an animal listed as threatened without a license.*
15. **If a BT is encountered within the exclusionary fencing, work cannot restart in this area until further instruction is provided by IDNR.**

16. Contractors are responsible for appointing construction personnel to become Trained Construction Monitors taught by TBD.

About Blanding's Turtles

Blanding's Turtles are semi-aquatic, medium-sized turtles, measuring up to 10 inches in upper shell length. They have a dark, domed shell with yellow flecks that may fade with age, and a bright yellow chin and throat. The lower shell or plastron has six pairs of scutes that are predominantly yellow with black blotching on the margins. Their notched upper jaw and up-curved mouth gives the appearance of a smile. Males and females appear similar with slight differences in size and shape. Hatchlings are 1.2 to 1.4 inches long and dark brown to black or gray, usually with faint speckling, and their underside pattern is not always apparent.





Blandings turtle



Spotted turtle



Spotted turtle



Box turtle



Wood turtle



Wood turtle



Painted turtle

Photo Credit David MacDougall



Snapping turtle



Blanding's Turtle Awareness
Training for Tri-County Solar

Fall 2025

Purpose of Training

- PURPOSE OF TRAINING
 - A project that avoids impacts to endangered species.
 - This happens when:
 - There is good communication between all parties.
 - Everyone is working with the same knowledge base.
 - Parties are in sync with each other.
 - Parties can say “let’s stop and discuss what’s next.”
- Doing the project correctly is more important than doing it quickly.

Blanding's turtle
(*Emydoidea*
blandingii)



Photo Credit David MacDougall

Identification

Carapace (Shell Top): Average 7-9" (10" Max), dark, and helmet/dome-shaped with yellow speckles that diminish with age.

Plastron (Shell Bottom): Hinged with predominantly yellow with black blotching on the margin of each scute.

Head: The top of the head is predominantly black with brown to yellow striations and light yellow speckles. The chin and throat are solid yellow. It has a notched upper jaw with an up-curved mouth giving the impression of a smile.

Legs: Dark with speckled of yellow.

Similar Species: Spotted turtle, wood turtle



Wood turtle



Spotted turtle



Photo Credit Casey Tompkins



Habitat

- Utilize a complex of habitats, which include both permanent and temporary water bodies and upland habitat
- Habitats include marshes, forested swamps, kettle holes, ponds, lakes, and streams, agricultural fields, forests, and yards.
- Prefer shallow wetlands with soft organic substrates and emergent vegetation (e.g., cattails, sedges), but use all wetland types in their range
- They are known to travel long distances - often more than a mile - in search of suitable habitats for breeding and feeding.
- They use upland areas more than many other aquatic turtle species. Upland habitats associated with wetlands are used as nesting sites and as travel corridors among permanent and temporary water bodies.

Habitats can be classified into one of the following four categories:

- Core Wetland
- Associated Wetland
- Upland Nesting Areas
- Other Upland Areas (i.e. corridors)



Wetland



Agricultural Field



Nesting Habitat



Golf Course Pond

Kane County (High potential use)

Shallow water with soft
organic substrates

Emergent vegetation
(cattails and sedge
tussocks)

Wetlands with slow-
moving water

Ponds and open water

Upland sites near
wetlands with
loose/disturbed soil

Open water, moats,
adjoining the shrubby
wetland

Overwinter in
permanent wetlands
with organic substrates
and at least a few inches
of unfrozen water









Associated Flora



Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)



Swamp azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)



Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)



Ecology

- Active April through October
- Timid and non-aggressive
- Excellent swimmers
- Omnivorous
- Overwinter beneath water or near water
- Travel up to 2 miles (Hudsonia Ltd., 2009)

- **Two Types of Travel:**
 - Annual Home Range
 - Long Distance

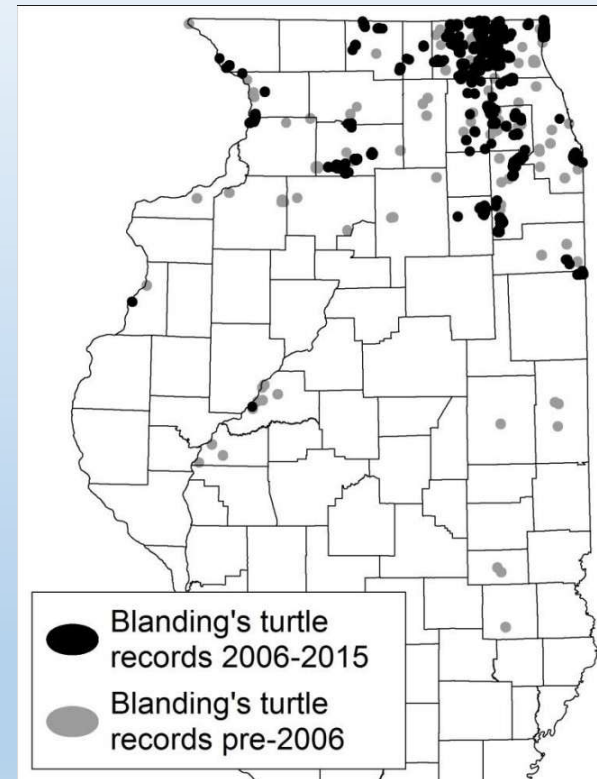
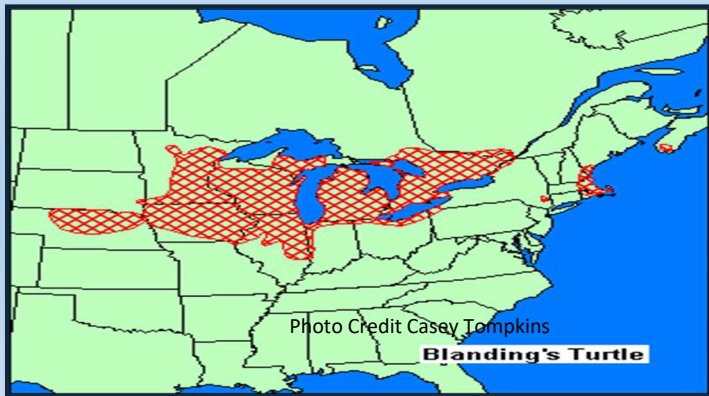
- **Reproduction:**
 - Each female is highly selective of a nesting site
 - Nesting soils are typically sandy loam to gravelly; prefer loose/previously disturbed soils. Agricultural fields are often chosen
 - Reproductive Maturity: approx. 15 Years
 - Breeding Season: April through May
 - Nesting Season: June/July
 - Clutch Size: 8-16 Eggs
 - Temperature Sex Dependent
 - Hatching: September/October



Photo Credit David MacDougall

Distribution

- Their distribution centers on the Great Lakes Region, extending to west-central Nebraska in the west, central Illinois in the south, and eastern Ontario in the northeast with a few separated populations in eastern New England and Nova Scotia
- In Illinois, observations are most common in the northern quarter of the state, but spotty observations have occurred along the Illinois River valley down to Cass County and across the eastern side of the state.
- It is estimated that Blanding's Turtles occur in just 22% of their historic range in Illinois



Blanding's Turtle records from the Illinois Natural Heritage Database

Regulatory Status

Illinois– Endangered Species

Federal – Under Review since 2015

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species - Endangered



Photo Credit Illinois Epidemiology Laboratory



Photo Credit David MacDougall

IDNR Guidelines

- Work on the project occurs during the turtle's inactive season from approximately November 1st to March 1st.

If work must occur during the active season:

- Educate personnel working on site about the Blanding's Turtle. Post photos of juvenile and adult Blanding's Turtles at a central location.
- State-listed species may not be handled without the appropriate permits pursuant to the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act
- Install exclusionary silt fence by the end of March and maintain it through October (if needed) to prevent turtles from entering the construction area. Conduct daily inspections during construction to ensure that exclusionary fencing is properly installed (dug into the ground) and to check if turtles are present.
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- If Blanding's turtles are encountered, crews should stop work immediately, allow the turtle to move out of the way and contact IDNR at (217) 785-5500.

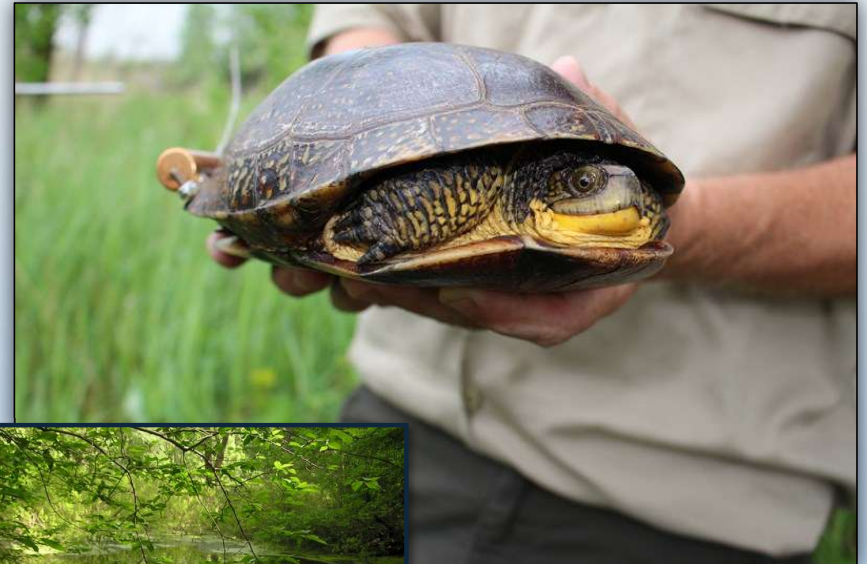


Photo Credit Lake County Forest Preserves



Photo Credit Casey Tompkins

IDNR Guidelines

No take of an endangered species is permitted without an Incidental Take Authorization or the required permits

- “Take” of listed species, defined as “to harm, hunt, shoot, pursue, lure, wound, kill, destroy, harass, gig, spear, ensnare, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in such conduct”
- IDNR can authorize the taking of listed species that is incidental to otherwise lawful activities



Photo Credit Illinois Epidemiology Laboratory



Photo Credit Gary Glowacki

Best Management Plan

- Construct the project in accordance with the plans and permit designed to minimize harm to this animal.
- Work within the secured zone only
- All individuals working on the site shall have received the Construction Education and Encounter Plan Training
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- **If a BT is encountered within the exclusionary fencing, work cannot restart in this area until the BT is relocated and the exclusionary fencing is inspected, repaired and signed off by the Qualified BT Monitor.**
- Contractors are responsible for appointing construction personnel to become Trained Construction Monitors taught by LaBella personnel.

If You See a Turtle Contact

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
(217) 785-5500